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SUBJECT: SLM UNITY MEETING YIELDS STILL ANOTHER FACTION

1. (SBU) SUMMARY: The attempt to reunify the Sudan Liberation Movement (SLM) at Ameri in Darfur last month appears instead to have succeeded in giving birth to yet another splinter group. According to its spokesman, speaking with us on May 22, the newly christened Revolutionary Military Council embraces over half of SLM's membership, though includes few of the SLM's political representatives based in or often seen passing through Chad. The new group, we were told, seeks a political settlement, but does not accept the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA) as the basis for talks. END SUMMARY

2, (U) At the request of Dr. Sharif Harir, an SLM political leader now visiting Asmara, Musa Tageldin, representative for the SLM's new Revolutionary Military Council, briefed the Ambassador and Poloff May 22 on the results of the meeting in April of SLM representatives in Ameri. Musa also responded to the Ambassador's points urging Darfur political talks on the basis of the DPA under the leadership of the United Nations and the African Union (AU). Musa was accompanied by his colleagues Abdul Jabar Beshir and Ahmad Mohammed Geri.

3, (SBU) Musa said the gathering in Ameri established a Transitional Revolutionary Council under the presidency of Abdullah Yaya. It also set up a new military organization under Abakar Kado and adopted decisions committing the group to respect for human rights. According to Musa, Sharif Harir had been offered the position of president, but agreed instead to assume responsibility for international affairs. SLM commander Ahmed Abdulshafi had been fully involved in the meetings, but backed out when his bid to be named president failed. He is now seeking to organize his own faction. Other SLM leaders or field commanders, including Khamis Abdullah, Adam Bakheit, Adam Shogar, and Abdelwahid Muhamed El Nur, stayed away entirely.

4. (SBU) Despite the failure to bring the SLM's disparate factions together in Ameri, Musa said, unification of the SLM remains the group's objective. He claimed that the meeting had obtained as much as 65 percent of that objective. Talks on bringing other prominent SLM representatives into the new group continue. Once that is accomplished, the intention is to come together under a "big umbrella" with the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), Ahmed Diraige's Federal Democratic Alliance, various Arab groups, and others.

5. (SBU) Musa said the goal is negotiation of a comprehensive peace agreement. The group seeks a political solution to the conflict in Darfur, but also knows it must be strong on the ground. It supports political talks and the lead role of the United Nations. It sees the AU as a fact of life that must be dealt with, though it cannot be trusted. Musa argued that the DPA is unacceptable as the basis for new talks, since it had been rejected by Darfur's people and has never been implemented. Reminded by the Ambassador of the consequences those seen as obstacles to the peace process

would face, Musa backed off, indicating that Sharif Harir, the group's lead negotiator, would have to address that issue. Musa also reported he felt no pressure from the Chadian government to leave Chad, notwithstanding commitments in the agreements in Tripoli and Riyadh about withdrawing support for rebel movements.

16. (SBU) COMMENT: The goal of SLM unity remains as remote as ever. Reaching a consensus among the various groups on a common negotiating position will not be easy to achieve either, but has a better chance of succeeding than efforts aimed at unification. END COMMENT
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